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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [SOCI](#) [ID](#)
SUBJECT: MODERATE MUSLIM GROUPS RELEASE BOOK ON RISE OF
RADICAL ISLAM IN INDONESIA

REF: A. JAKARTA 875
[1](#)B. 06 JAKARTA 11472

Classified By: Ambassador Cameron R. Hume, reasons 1.4 (b+d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The anti-extremist nonprofit LibForAll Foundation recently launched a provocative new book outlining Islamic hardline attempts to infiltrate mainstream Muslim organizations and replace moderate Islam in Indonesia with a more radical form. Seen by many as a political move, the book was released to the media on the eve of Indonesia's recent legislative elections. Jointly published by the country's two largest mass Muslim organizations, the book was supposed to be officially released last week. However, the country's largest bookstore chain, which was scheduled to release the book, opted out due to a series of threats. Some insiders say the book is factual, but overly alarmist. Extremists may see the book as another example of "foreign intervention," particularly as the book is directly associated with the U.S.-based NGO LibForAll. END SUMMARY.

A NEW BOOK ON EXTREMISM

[1](#)2. (U) LibForAll Foundation, a non-profit working to reduce religious extremism and terrorism, in coordination with the country's two largest mass Muslim organizations Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)--with over 80 million followers--published a book entitled, "The Illusion of an Islamic State: the Expansion of Transnational Islamist Movements in Indonesia." Liberal think tanks of the two organizations, The Wahid Institute, The Maarif Institute and the Unity in Diversity Movement, cooperated with LibForAll to conduct a two-year study of extremist infiltration throughout Indonesia. The research teams carried out interviews with approximately 600 individuals identified as "extremists" from numerous organizations, to identify key unifying principles within their ideologies and agendas and to ascertain the extent to which these groups had "infiltrated" mainstream institutions.

[1](#)3. (C) The book sketches the history of radical Islam in Indonesia from its Wahabi roots and claims these radical Muslim groups have infiltrated major mass-based Muslim organizations. NU, Muhammadiyah, and the quasi-government body, the Indonesian Council of Muslim Scholars (MUI) are all said to be effected by this trend. The book also claims that both public and private Muslim schools are being infiltrated by extremists. Arguably the most controversial claim in the book is that the country's most popular Islamic-based political party, the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), is at heart a hardline Muslim party bent on infiltrating other organizations to achieve the ultimate goal of implementing

Sharia law in Indonesia. PKS received 8% of the vote in the April Legislative elections and is a member of President Yudhoyono's ruling coalition. PKS is Islamic oriented, but it does not officially pursue an Islamic state. LibForAll takes a less nuanced view of PKS.

BOOK PROVES CONTROVERSIAL

¶4. (C) Even before its release, the book had created controversy. Officially released last week, the bookstore chain Gramedia, which was to sell the book, backed out of the deal after receiving threats from hardliners. Consequently, the book is only available at the Wahid Institute. According to sources, an unidentified caller called Gramedia and threatened to burn down any store selling and distributing the book.

¶5. (C) It is unclear who is behind the threats, but a similar incident occurred in 2006 when The Asia Foundation (TAF) came under intense criticism from a hardline Indonesian Islamist magazine for "supporting organizations and individuals who defame Islam." This accusation came about due to TAF's affiliation with the Liberal Islam Network (JIL), who the extremists claimed had issued statements and publications that defamed Islam. At that time, the hardliners claimed TAF was a CIA front organization bankrolling "missionary" groups designed to "change the face of Islam" as a part of the U.S war on terrorism (REF B). Given that the founder and CEO of LibForAll is American, the book is likely to be seen as another example of "foreign intervention."

¶6. (C) Raja Juli Antoni, Executive Director of the Maarif

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Institute of Culture and Humanity, and co-publisher of the book, told us he had been very concerned with the contents of the book before its launch. Although factually true, he said, the book jumped to many alarming conclusions. For example, he felt there was a growing conservatism due to hardline influence, but did not feel Indonesia was under threat of turning into an Islamic state. In fact, he attempted to disassociate the Maarif Institute from the book after reading the first draft, pointing out a long list of "problems." However, Antoni said he felt compelled to publish the book after the researchers addressed most of his concerns in the re-write. Antoni also suggested that the timing of the soft release of the book was politically motivated and designed to harm the PKS's chances in the April legislative elections. Azyumardi Azra, a leading Islamic scholar and advisor to Vice President Jusuf Kalla, has made public statements of the same nature, although he sits on the Board of Advisors for the LibForAll Foundation.

¶7. (C) PKS legislator Zulkieflimansyah (one name only) told us that despite the accusations made against the PKS throughout the book, he wasn't concerned. "It was published by the Wahid Institute," he said, "And, Indonesians don't have any respect for the Wahid Institute." That said, several days after the soft launch, Zulkieflimansyah published an editorial in the leading English-language newspaper commenting on how the PKS needed to change its image to not appear "intolerant." He also acknowledged there was an internal division within the party, with party founders remaining committed to transforming Indonesia into an Islamic state versus party reformers committed to the idea of Pancasila, the official philosophical foundation of the Indonesian state guaranteeing freedom of religion.

AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION

¶8. (C) C. Holland Taylor, LibForAll Foundation founder and CEO, told us that his goal for the book was to have every local mayor and regional governor use the book as a guide to counter extremism. Taylor, a strong supporter of the religious leader and former President Abdurrahman Wahid "Gus

Dur," said he would like to see all of Indonesia continue to practice a moderate form of Islam. His goal, he said, is to spread the type of Islam practiced by NU, which is classified as "traditionalist"--highly influenced by ancient Javanese spiritualism and mysticism. NU is a socio-religious organization, deeply rooted in local custom, and centered on a robust boarding school (pesantren) network, which provides students with a more tolerant understanding of Islamic ideas.

19. (C) A book with this type of critical content is certain to generate controversy among conservative Muslim circles but liberal former President Wahid and his Wahid Institute seem to be positioned to withstand the heat. For example, he is the only prominent Muslim to have openly visited Israel. However, the book's association with a U.S. NGO could prove controversial, since any foreign involvement in religious matters in Indonesia is very sensitive. C. Holland Taylor is mentioned in the book as one of the researchers and he has been open about his association with the book. The book also overly simplifies the influence of extremist groups in major mass Muslim organizations which remain mainstream and progressive, but encompass a wide range of religious thought. Still, the book is an important contribution to the understanding of extreme ideology in Indonesia.

HUME